King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Water Quality Survey

December 2005



TABLE OF CONTENTS

METHODOLOGY	2
KEY FINDINGS	3
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	<u>5</u>
General Environmental Issues	5
Most Important Environmental Issue	5
Salmon Populations	6
County Efforts to Protect Salmon/Habitat	7
County Services	8
County Services and the Environment	8
Familiarity with selected King County services	8
Rating of selected King County services	9
Water Quality in King County	10
Protecting Water Quality	10
Water Quality Education	11
Watersheds	12
Sewage Treatment Facilities	13
Biosolids	14
Reclaimed Water	16
Sewage and Stormwater	24
APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS	25

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on the findings of a telephone survey conducted December 14-18, 2005 by Evans/McDonough. Four hundred (400) King County residents were selected for interviewing using an RDD (Random Digit Dial) sample. This sampling method means that every working phone number in King County has an equal chance of being selected for participation in the survey. Respondents were interviewed by trained, professional telephone interviewers. Respondents were screened to make sure they were over 18 years old and lived in King County. The margin of error for the overall survey results is \pm 4.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. This confidence level means that if the survey were repeated, it would provide the same results to within \pm 4.9 percentage points 95 times out of 100.

Research Design Summary

#Interviews: 400

Interviewing Dates: December 14-18, 2005

Margin of Error: ± 4.9 points at the 95% confidence level

Universe: King County residents 18 years or older

Results are compared where appropriate and possible to previous water quality surveys conducted by EMC. In general, the 2005 survey questionnaire underwent more changes than in previous tracking years, to address program changes and clarify language. For this reason, direct year-by-year comparisons with previous data are more difficult because specific language has changed.

KEY FINDINGS

Many 2005 results are consistent with results from previous years.

- The most important environmental problem continues to be air quality.
- County residents continue to be aware that the County provides salmon and habitat protection, and they continue to overwhelmingly believe that water quality has a significant impact on salmon.
- At the same time, residents also believe the County isn't doing enough to bring salmon and bull trout back from endangerment.
- Residents continue to agree that garbage disposal, sewage treatment, and stormwater management help protect the environment.
- Residents are overwhelmingly able to define what a watershed is, but also continue to struggle in identifying the watershed they live in.
- Residents continue to be overwhelmingly concerned about the County running out of sewage treatment capacity.

Some results that are tracked year to year have improved since 2004, especially those that are the core components of Water Quality services.

- Job performance ratings for County water quality management (+7), wastewater treatment services (+7), and stormwater management (+5) have all improved.
- Resident rating for the job King County does at protecting water quality in 2005 is the highest rating on record.

Additional questions that have been altered show similar results to past years.

- Residents support each of three potential options for the use of biosolids.
- More than half (60%) say they are likely to use a compost or topsoil that contains biosolids in their landscaping or home garden.

New questions about reclaimed water show strong resident support and demand for a reclaimed water network.

- Well over three-quarters (82%) of residents say the County should use as much reclaimed water as possible.
- Residents are most likely (69%) to choose a non-drinking use like irrigation for this water.
- The vast majority of residents (at least 73%) have no concerns with using reclaimed water for a variety of uses, and suggests a significant market for reclaimed water.
 - Residents are most likely to have objections to using reclaimed water at
 "schools that children use" or in "growing vegetables for sale". These are
 two areas where residents need more education about reclaimed water and
 how it does or does not impact people or food.
 - Concerns about reclaimed water center on what this water might leave behind.
- A series of messages in favor of using reclaimed water are highly effective, and all tested are persuasive reasons for at least three-quarters (75%) of residents to use reclaimed water.
 - o More than half (61%) of residents say they would be more likely to use a business or buy a product if it used reclaimed water.
- A strong majority (71%) of residents say they would be willing to pay \$1 more per month on their sewer bill to help build a reclaimed water system.
 - o If this program were voluntary, the "mean" dollar amount residents would pay is \$10 a month, though the "median" amount is \$1.

More than three-quarters (79%) of residents are willing to pay \$1.50 per month on their sewer bill to reduce the occurrence of sewage/stormwater releases into Puget Sound.

• This is a net improvement of +8 percentage points from the last time the question was asked in 1997.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

General Environmental Issues

Most Important Environmental Issue

Air and water pollution are still the most mentioned environmental problem, but they no longer comprise a majority of mentions.

- Mentions of air quality concerns have dropped slightly from 30% to 26%.
- Growth is mentioned by 12% of residents the same as in 2003 but much lower than the peak mentions in 2002 (29%) when growth was the top concern.
- Mentions of water pollution and water quality are at their lowest level since 2000, though the drop is just outside the margin of error.

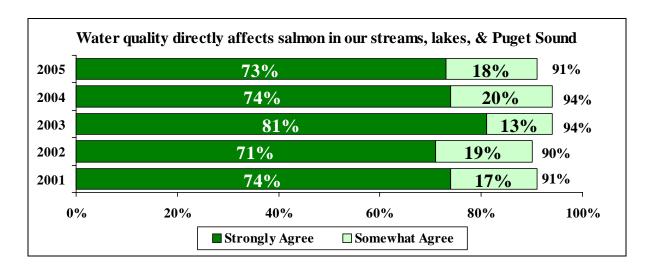
C) 7.	What do	vou think	is the n	nost imi	ortant er	nvironmental	issue	facing	our region	today?
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Issue	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Air pollution	38	20	19	23	30	26
Water pollution/quality	17	23	22	26	24	19
Growth/Population growth	8	16	29	12	12	10
Global warming/Ozone	5	3	6	4	6	7
Deforestation	5	3	4	5	3	5
Salmon	9	5	3	2	4	2
Toxic waste	2	2	3	1	2	1
Fuel Shortage/Gas Prices						2
Vehicle Emissions				6		
Energy/Power Conservation				1		
Garbage/Landfills/Trash				1		
Recycling				1		
Water Shortage/Availability				1		2
Traffic/Transportation		7	4			2
Anthrax		1	1			
War/terrorism		1				
None/Other/DK/Refused	17	19	10	16	19	22

Salmon Populations

Almost all (91%) residents continue to agree that there is a direct link between water quality and the health of salmon. This concern has remained relatively constant over the past five years.

• King County residents continue to strongly believe that water quality has a significant impact on salmon.



• The mean score rating how at risk salmon populations in the region are has increased since 2004. This is not an indication of growing concern, however, as the mean score is within the range established by data from the previous five years.

Q28.	On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means not at all at risk and 7 means extremely at risk, how at risk do
	you think salmon populations in our region are?

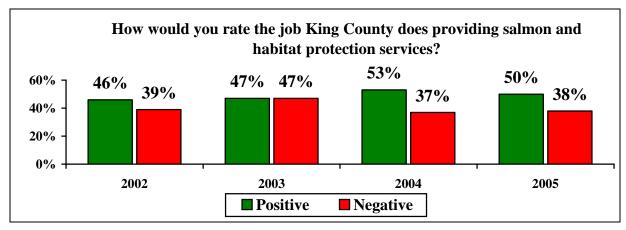
Rank	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7- Extremely at risk	20	22	23	19	18
6	7	17	16	11	12
5	26	24	26	25	33
4	18	17	17	15	15
3	7	6	10	15	10
2	3	3	3	3	3
1- Not at all at risk	5	4	3	3	3
(Don't Know)	4	7	2	7	5
MEAN	4.92	5.11	5.03	4.78	4.92

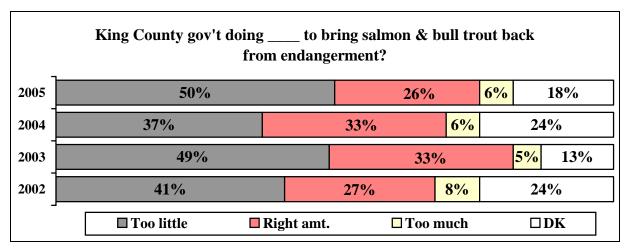
County Efforts to Protect Salmon/Habitat

As in previous surveys, most King County residents (68%) are aware that the county provides salmon and habitat protection. As in the 2004 survey, a majority (50%) give the county a positive rating for the job it does protecting salmon and salmon habitat.

• At the same time, the percentage who say the county is doing "too little" to bring salmon & bull trout back from endangerment (50%) has returned to 2003 levels (49% in 2003).





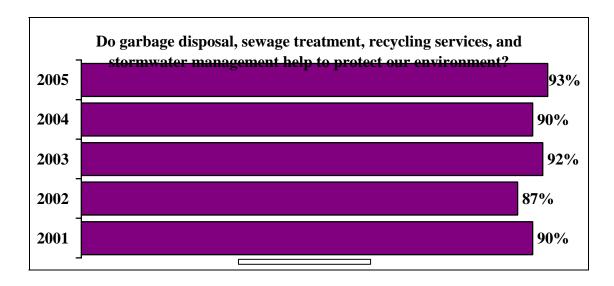


County Services

County Services and the Environment

Almost all residents (93%) agree that county services like garbage disposal, sewage treatment, recycling and stormwater management help to protect the environment.

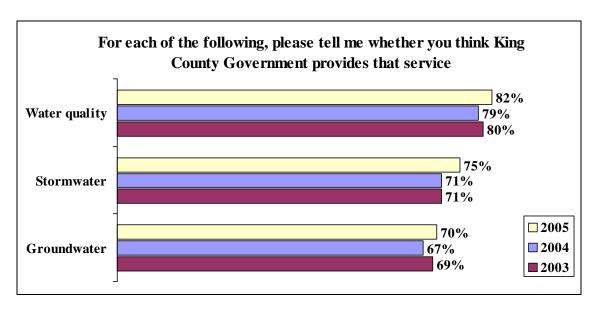
• These results are statistically equivalent to the results from previous surveys.



Familiarity with selected King County services

Reported awareness of King County groundwater management, stormwater management, and water quality management services is high and is consistent with the last three years.

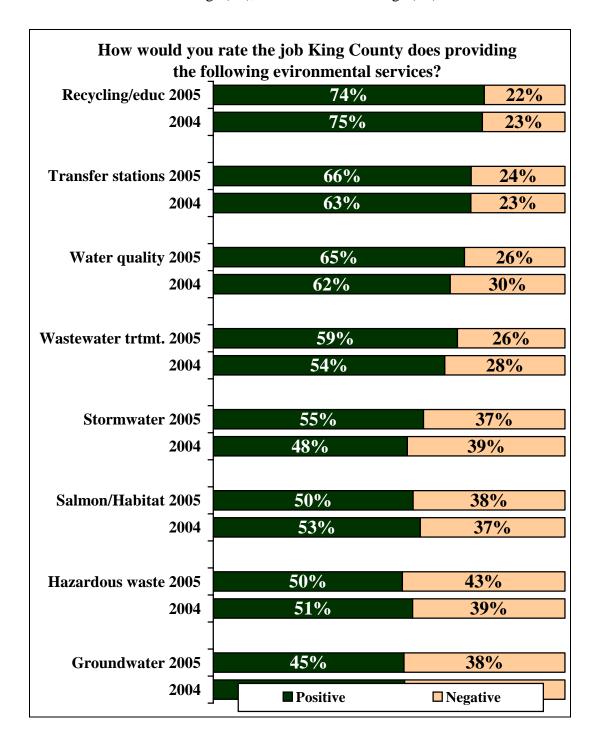
• More than two-thirds of residents say they are aware that King County provides water quality, stormwater, and groundwater management services.



Rating of selected King County services

County residents give roughly the same ratings in 2005 to a set of job performance questions asked in 2004. Recycling services and education (74% positive) continue to be the highest scoring item.

• Most ratings are consistent with figures from the 2004 survey. Changes to a few rating items reach outside the margin of error, including an improvement in water quality ratings (+7), wastewater treatment ratings (+7), and stormwater ratings (+5).

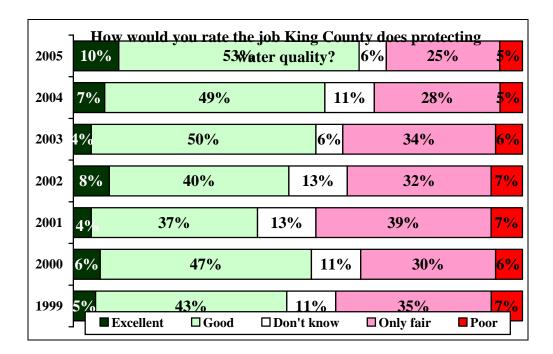


Water Quality in King County

Protecting Water Quality

King County's rating for the job it does protecting water quality (63% positive / 30% negative) has consistently improved since 2003, and is now the highest on record.

- The positive rating is the highest (63%) and negative rating the lowest (30%) it has been since we first asked the question in 1999. The 2005 rating is a net improvement of +10 points over the 2004 rating, and a net improvement of +38 points over the lowest rating recorded in 2001.
- As in past years, there is little intensity of opinion ("excellent" or "poor") in residents' rating of the job King County does protecting water quality. Ratings are concentrated in the middle, at "good" (53%) and "only fair" (25%).



• Differences between subgroups on this rating are not statistically significant.

Water Quality Education

When asked how the county can improve its efforts to protect water quality, the top response continues to be "education/increase awareness."

Q25. How could King County improve its efforts to protect water quality throughout the county?

	<u> 1999</u>	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Education/Make people aware	19	16	18	21	22	14	21

• Fewer respondents answered "don't know" to this question; nearly half (45%) answered "don't know" in 2004 while roughly a third (35%) said the same in 2005. While this is not a dramatic change, it does indicate an increased diversity of opinion and resident awareness. The complete list of responses is shown below:

(Education/Awareness)	21
(Better enforcement of laws/higher fines)	7
(Limit development)	7
(Tougher environmental laws)	4
(Spend more money/higher priority)	4
(Better storm water/runoff water management)	6
(More research)	4
(Doing a good job now)	3
(Staff/Elected officials need to change)	2
(Pesticide control/Contamination)	2
(OTHER)	2
(Nothing)	2
(Don't Know/Refused)	35

Watersheds

When given a selection of responses, almost three-quarters of residents (70%) successfully pick the correct definition of a watershed. However, a majority (59%) still cannot name the watershed they live in.

• These results are statistically equivalent to the results from previous years.

Q26. Which of the following three definitions best describe	es a water	sned?		
	2001	2002	2003	2004

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
A shed that contains water pumps	4	5	7	4	8
A facility where water is purified	16	11	11	13	13
An area of land that drains water to a common outlet	72	66	75	71	70
(Don't know)	7	18	6	11	9

• When asked what watershed they live in, well over half (59%) say they don't know.

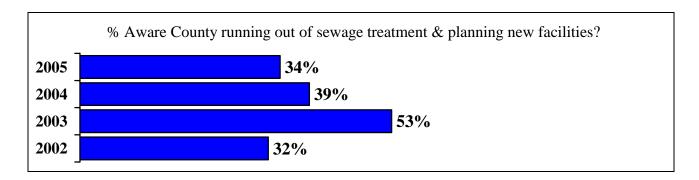
Q27.	As you may know, a watershed is an area of land that drains water to a central outlet. Can you
	tell us what watershed you live in?

	<u>1999</u>	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Cedar/Cedar River	8	10	12	12	14	8	12
Lake Young	-	2	2	1	3	2	1
Tolt River	2	5	3	3	2	3	3
Thornton Creek	-	-	1	1	2	-	-
Soos Creek	2	1	1	2	2	-	-
Puget Sound	2	2	1	1	2	2	1
Piper's Creek	_	2	2	1	1	1	-
King County	-	2	1	1	1	-	-
Green River	2	4	3	3	1	3	3
Lake Washington	-	-	1	1	1	-	-
Sammamish	-	-	1	1	1	1	1
Redmond	-	-	1	1		-	-
Snoqualmie	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Other Mentions	20		8	18	18	10	17
Don't know	64	71	62	54	50	61	59

Sewage Treatment Facilities

Though awareness of King County running out of sewage treatment capacity has dropped from its highest level in 2003 (53%), an overwhelming majority (81%) are concerned about the County running out of sewage treatment capacity.

• A majority of residents (66%) are not aware that the county is running out of sewage treatment capacity and planning for new facilities, and a third (34%) are aware, a decline of 5 points. **NOTE:** Prior to 2003, this question was asked as "Are you aware that King County is planning for future sewage treatment facilities?"



• The question about resident concern over sewage treatment capacity was changed in 2005. A comparison of the different version is shown below.

2003 and 2004 Version

Does it concern you that either sewage overflows and backups could occur or that new building permits could be halted if King County runs out of sewage treatment capacity?

	2003	2004
Yes	83	73
No/(Don't Know	17	26

2005 Version

Q31. Are you concerned or not concerned that sewage overflows and backups could occur and that new building permits could be halted if King County runs out of sewage treatment capacity?

2005

Extremely Concerned	44	
Somewhat Concerned	37	=> 81
Not Concerned	14	
Don't Know/Refused	5	

Biosolids

While a plurality of residents say best use of biosolids is for agriculture and forestry purposes (35%), each of the potential options has support. A majority of residents (60%) say they would be at least somewhat likely to purchase biosolids soil mix or compost.

• In 2005, the introductory question about biosolids was edited for clarity and uniformity of answers. The two version of the question are below:

2004 Version

Now I would like to ask you a question about biosolids. The nutrient-rich, organic solids that are recovered from wastewater and then treated are called biosolids. For many years, King County has been safely recycling biosolids as a fertilizer and soil amendment for agricultural and forestry uses and as an ingredient in compost. Of the following, which do you think would be the best use of biosolids and compost to help improve soils, water quality and habitats?

Make more compost available for home and garden use	10
Use for land reclamation and soil improvement projects	28
Continue to use in agriculture and forestry	37
(All of the above)	13
(None of the above/Don't Know)	12

2005 Version

Q32. Now I would like to ask you a few questions about biosolids. In our area, storm water and sewer water from homes is cleaned at treatment plants. During the process, nutrient-rich, organic solids are recovered and treated to make a product called biosolids. For many years, King County has been safely recycling biosolids. Of the following, which do you think would be the best use of biosolids?

Use in compost or topsoil for landscaping and home gardens	20
Use for restoring land without vegetation, such as gravel pits	26
Use in agriculture and forestry	35
(All of the above)	9
(None of the above/Don't Know)	8

While changes in the questions make a direct comparison difficult, the 2005 results show
resident support for each of the three potential uses for biosolids. Use in agriculture and
forestry (35%) receives a plurality of mentions, but all three options receive a share of
mentions as in 2004.

. .

• In 2005, a question about likeliness to purchase a biosolids product was also changed. The two versions of the question are shown below:

2004 Version

Using a scale of very likely, somewhat likely, not that likely and not at all likely, if a biosolids soil mix or compost was available in bags, for a competitive price at a local garden center, how likely would you be to buy and use it?

Very likely	28	
Somewhat likely	27	=> 55
Not that likely	18	=>40
Not at all likely	22	
(Don't know)	4	

2005 Version

Q33. Some biosolids are composted or mixed with other materials to create products for landscaping and home gardens. Using a scale of very likely, somewhat likely, not that likely and not at all likely, how likely are you to use compost or topsoil containing biosolids in your landscaping or home garden?

Very likely	26	
Somewhat likely	34	=> 60
Not that likely	14	=> 36
Not at all likely	22	
(Don't know)	3	

- Again, though the figures are not directly comparable due to question changes, a majority (60%) continue to say they would be at least somewhat likely to purchase biosolids soil mix.
- There are few differences on many demographic subgroups between those that say they are likely and those who are not likely to purchase a biosolids soil or compost mix. One subgroup where the difference is significant is in homeownership; homeowners are more likely (64% Likely) to purchase this mix than renters (52% Likely).

Reclaimed Water

The section on reclaimed water has been expanded and altered in the 2005 survey to better understand support among county residents for using reclaimed water, and identify barriers to expanding the use of reclaimed water.

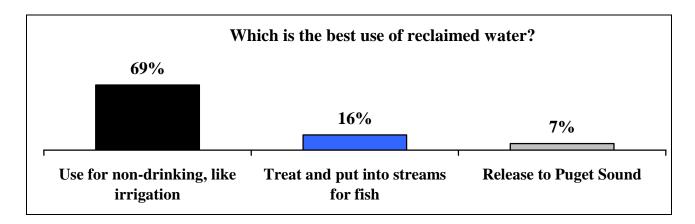
Residents overwhelmingly support reusing as much wastewater as possible.

- The 2005 survey asks residents whether the County should make an effort to use reclaimed water or not. The results of this question indicate strong support among residents for King County using as much reclaimed water as possible.
- Q34. Changing subjects, I'd like to ask you about reclaimed water. King County collects wastewater from sewers. Some of this water will soon be sent to a new treatment plant that has the ability to treat this water to near drinking water quality. This water is called reclaimed water. Although it is not suitable for drinking, reclaimed water can be used for a variety of purposes. In general, would you like to see King County reuse as much of this water as possible, or should King County not make an effort to reuse this water? (IF UNDECIDED) Well, do you lean towards reusing as much as possible or towards not making an effort to reuse this water?

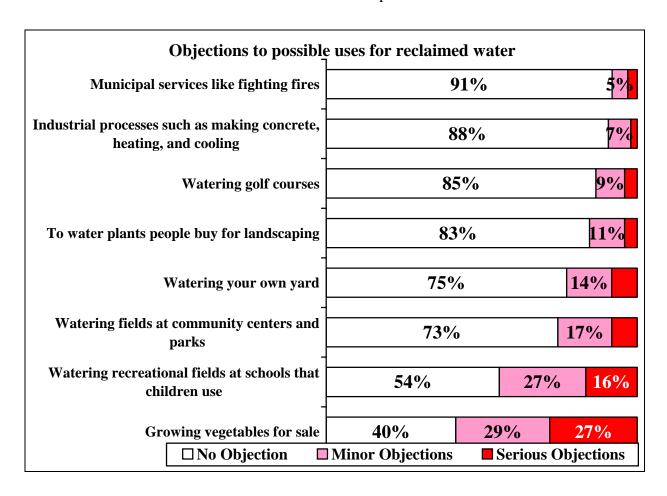
Reuse as much of this water as possible	79	
(Lean reuse as much as possible)	3	=> 82
Not make an effort to reuse this water	11	
(Lean not make an effort to reuse this water)	1	=> 12
(Undecided/Doesn't Matter)	6	

- Well over three-quarters (82%) of King County residents say the County should reuse as much reclaimed water as possible. This indicates overwhelming resident support for a reclaimed water program.
- Though 12% of County residents say the County "should not make an effort" to reuse this water, it does not seem that they fully understand what reclaimed water is. In a follow-up question about possible options the County has for reusing this water, more than half (59%) of this group say that reclaimed water should be "used for irrigation".

• Residents are then asked about a variety of potential options for using reclaimed water. A strong majority of residents say the best use of this water is for non-drinking purposes like irrigation (69%).



Residents are then asked a series of questions about specific potential uses for reclaimed
water. The purpose of the question series is twofold; first, to help identify potential markets
for reclaimed water, and second, to identify those uses for reclaimed water that might need
additional resident education to make them acceptable.



- The results of this question series provides useful information on potential market sizes for products that use reclaimed water.
 - o It suggests that the vast majority of residents (at least 73%) have no concerns with using reclaimed water for a wide variety of uses. It also suggests a significant market for reclaimed water for virtually all of these uses.
 - The two main issues of concern deal with reclaimed water and its possible impact on children or vegetables grown for consumption. These two stand out as items where residents need additional education about reclaimed water and how it does or does not impact people or food.
- In general, women are more likely to object to the various uses for reclaimed water (Q36 Q43) than men.
- Women (67% Object) are more likely than men (46% Object) to have objections to using reclaimed water for growing vegetables (Q41). The "objection" level is even higher among younger women; nearly three-quarters (72%) of women under 50 years old have objections to using reclaimed water for growing vegetables, and
- Women (50% Object) are also more likely than men (37% Object) to have objections to using reclaimed water on fields at schools that children use (Q37).

Resident questions about reclaimed water center on what it might leave behind.

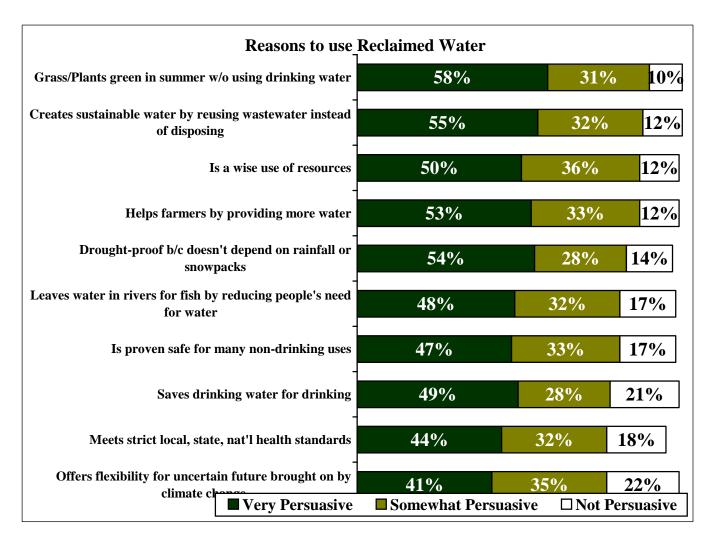
• Following the "objections" section, residents are asked what questions they have about the use of reclaimed water. The questions posed by respondents are highly informative as to their concerns about the use of reclaimed water. Though residents have been given a basic explanation of what reclaimed water is, the answers to the "objection" series and the openended "questions about reclaimed water" series show that a "basic" definition of reclaimed water may not be enough for many residents to be completely comfortable with the use of reclaimed water if it impacts them.

Q44. What questions, if any, do you have about the use of reclaimed water?	
	<u>2005</u>
Is it safe?/Needs to be 100% safe	9
Will there be chemicals left behind?/Minerals?/Pollution?	7
Is this cost effective?/Will it raise taxes?/How is it paid for?	5
What affects are there on people?/Is it fit for human consumption?	5
Will the water be pure?/Drinkable?	5
Why is this water suitable for vegetation and not humans?	4
Water will be available to whom?/Will I use this water?	3
How is water treated?/What testing is involved?	3
Are children at risk?/Will it affect the children?	3
Need more education regarding this/Public meetings	3
Other	7
None/Nothing	45
Refused	1

- The main concern of residents who offered a response to this question is the distinction between reclaimed water and "drinking water".
- Though all respondents were given the opportunity to answer this open-ended question, almost half (45%) said they have no concerns with the use of reclaimed water. At the same time, this means that more than half (55%) were able to think of a question they have about reclaimed water. This shows that even though many respondents did not register objections to many of the potential uses, there remain questions about reclaimed water as the potential use when this water comes into contact with residents in one fashion or another, whether through direct contact or consumption of a product using reclaimed water.

Residents are asked about arguments in favor of using reclaimed water. All of the arguments are highly effective, and are persuasive reasons for at least three-quarters (75%) of residents to use reclaimed water.

• All of the messages in support of using reclaimed water are highly effective with a strong majority of residents. The strongest message is that reclaimed water can "keep grass and plants green in the summer without using drinking water"; more than half (58%) say this is a "very persuasive" reason to use reclaimed water, and has the highest level of intensity of support of any message tested in the section. An additional third (31%) of County residents say this is a "somewhat persuasive" reason, and only 10% say this reason is not persuasive.



• The top-scoring reason among those tested is only indirectly related to the "public good"; it is much more closely related to an individual motivator of keeping a personal yard green during the summer. It is highly likely that individual motivators, like reduced cost while allowing residents to continue the same behavior (summer watering) may be as strong as or stronger than reasons in the "public good" for using reclaimed water.

- All of these messages are generally less persuasive among residents who said the County
 "should not make an effort" or were "undecided" when asked what the County should do
 with reclaimed water than among County residents overall. This does not mean messages
 supporting the use of reclaimed water are not effective among these two groups.
- Two-thirds (66%) of those who said the County should "not make an effort" said that "keeping grass and plants green without using drinking water" is a persuasive reason to use reclaimed water; three-quarters (75%) of undecided residents also said this was a persuasive reason to use reclaimed water.

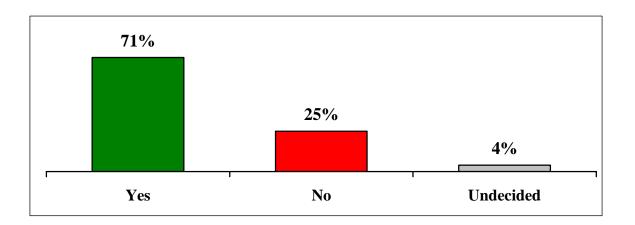
Though an overwhelming percentage (82%) of residents think they County should use as much reclaimed water as possible, a smaller percentage (61%) say they would be more likely to use a business or buy a product if they used reclaimed water.

- A quarter (23%) of County residents say they would be much more likely to use a business or buy a product that used reclaimed water. An additional 38% say they would be somewhat more likely.
- Younger county residents are more likely to use a business or buy a product that used reclaimed water. Two-thirds (66%) of County residents under 50 years old say they would be more likely, while just over half (55%) of County residents over 50 years old say the same.

A strong majority (71%) of County residents say they would be willing to pay one dollar more a month on their sewer bill to help build a reclaimed water system.

• Only a quarter (25%) say they would not be willing to pay a dollar more to help build the system.

Q56. Right now, there is enough money to build the major service lines to get reclaimed water to parts of King County. But, unlike the water and sewer lines that serve homes and businesses, service lines to bring reclaimed or recycled water to individual users do not exist yet. Would you be willing to pay one dollar more per month on your sewer bill to help build this



- Women are more likely to say they are willing to pay \$1 than men. Three-quarters (76%) of women say yes, while two-thirds (66%) of men say the same.
 - O Younger women are particularly supportive; 81% of women under 50 years old say they are willing to pay \$1 more per month.
 - O Younger men (73% Yes, Men under 50 years old) and older women (70% Yes, Women over 50 years old) also strongly support \$1 per month.
 - o Only among men over 50 years old (56% Yes) does support fall below 70%.

- Following this question, respondents are asked what they might pay if this program were voluntary.
 - **Q57.** What if this program were voluntary, that is, you could choose to pay more on your bill to support building this system. How much would you choose per month to pay to help build this system?
- Almost a third (29%) of respondents said they would not pay anything on their bill; slightly higher than the quarter (25%) who said "no" in the previous question. An additional 13% refused to answer the question.
- The "mean" or average dollar amount from all responses is just over \$10 a month (\$10.19). However, the "median" amount, where half the scores are above and half the scores are below, is \$1 a month.

Sewage and Stormwater

More than three-quarters of residents (79%) are willing to pay \$1.50 per month on their sewer bill to reduce the occurrence of sewage/stormwater releases into Puget Sound.

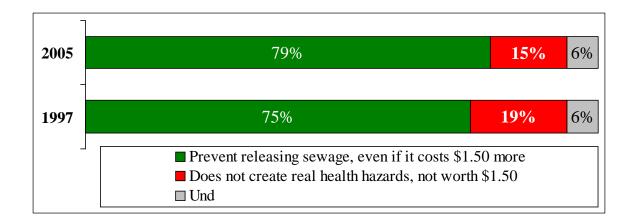
- Five times as many residents are willing to pay \$1.50 more per month (79%) as are not willing to pay (15%).
- This is a net improvement of +8 percentage points in favor of the \$1.50 charge from the last time this question was asked of County residents in 1997.

Q58. In some areas of King county, sewage and stormwater travel through the same pipes. During heavy rains, this combination of sewage and stormwater can overflow into Puget Sound and other waterways because sewer pipes are full. This can happen up to 100 times per year, during our heavier storms. We will soon pay about a dollar and fifty cents more per month on our sewer bills to reduce the occurrence of these releases, but this will not eliminate the problem. Which of the following comes closest to your opinion?

We should prevent releasing this diluted sewage into Puget Sound rivers and lakes during storms, even if it costs \$1.50 more per month on our sewer rates

OR

Some people believe releasing some diluted sewage into Puget Sound rivers and lakes during storms does not create any real health hazards for people or wildlife. It is not worth \$1.50 more per month on our sewer rates to prevent it.



- Men (74%) are less likely than women (84%) to support the additional \$1.50, but support among both groups is very strong.
- One of the lowest levels of support in subgroups is among men over fifty years old (61%), though even in this group support is still well above a majority.

APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS

	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Gender							
Male	48	48	48	49	50	49	49
Female	52	52	52	51	50	51	51
Homeowner							
Own/buying	72	66	72	69	72	77	68
Rent	28	32	27	29	27	21	28
(DK/Refused)	2	2	1	2	1	1	4
Children living at home							
Yes	31	36	32	33	27	33	38
No/(Refused)	69	64	68	67	73	67	62
Age							
18-24	8	10	8	8	7	6	8
25-29	6	9	10	9	7	6	9
30-34	9	10	8	9	10	10	11
35-39	10	11	8	8	10	11	9
40-44	13	12	12	12	8	11	12
45-49	14	10	9	10	12	11	10
50-54	8	12	11	10	11	11	12
55-59	7	6	7	6	9	9	7
60-64	5	6	5	3	8	7	4
65+	18	13	18	21	16	15	15
(Refused)	3	3	3	4	2	1	2